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"Presently our hunter came back."

A

Moosehead Journal.

BY

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

Illustrated.

BOSTON:
JAMES R. OSGOOD AND COMPANY,
Late Ticknor and Fields, and Fields, Osgood, & Co.
1877.

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University Press: Welch, Bigelow, & Co.,
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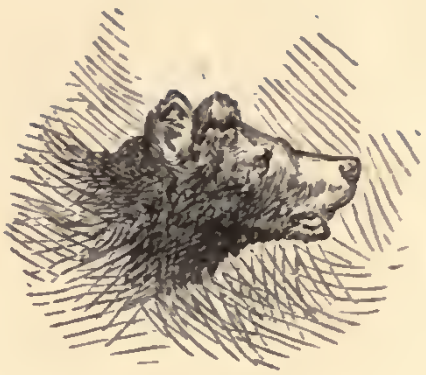

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A MOOSEHEAD JOURNAL.

A MOOSEHEAD JOURNAL.

Addressed to the Edelmann Storg at the Bagni di Lucca.

THURSDAY, 11*th August*. — I knew as little yesterday of the interior of Maine as the least penetrating person knows of the inside of that great social mill-stone which, driven by the river Time, sets imperatively agoing the several wheels of our individual activities. Born while Maine was still a province of native Massachusetts, I was as much a foreigner to it as yourself, my dear Storg. I had seen many lakes, ranging from that of Virgil's Cumæan to that of Scott's Caledonian Lady; but Moosehead, within two days of me, had never enjoyed the profit of being mirrored in my retina. At the sound of the name, no reminiscential atoms (according

to Kenelm Digby's Theory of Association, — as good as any) stirred and marshalled themselves in my brain. The truth is, we think lightly of Nature's penny shows, and estimate what we see by the cost of the ticket. Empedocles gave his life for a pit-entrance to Ætna, and no doubt found his account in it. Accordingly, the clean face of Cousin Bull is imaged patronizingly in Lake George, and Loch Lomond glasses the hurried countenance of Jonathan, diving deeper in the streams of European association (and coming up drier) than any other man. Or is the cause of our not caring to see what is equally within the reach of all our neighbors to be sought in that aristocratic principle so deeply implanted in human nature? I knew a pauper graduate who always borrowed a black coat, and came to eat the Commencement dinner, — not that it was better than the one which daily graced the board of the public institution in which he hibernated (so to speak) during the other three hundred and sixty-four days of the year, save in this one particular, that none of his eleemosynary fellow-commoners could eat it. If

there are unhappy men who wish that they were as the Babe Unborn, there are more who would aspire to the lonely distinction of being that other figurative personage, the Oldest Inhabitant. You remember the charming irresolution of our dear Esthwaite, (like Macheath between his two doxies,) divided between his theory that he is under thirty, and his pride at being the only one of us who witnessed the September gale and the rejoicings at the Peace? Nineteen years ago I was walking through the Franconia Notch, and stopped to chat with a hermit, who fed with gradual logs the unwearied teeth of a saw-mill. As the panting steel slit off the *slabs* of the log, so did the less willing machine of talk, acquiring a steadier up-and-down motion, pare away that outward bark of conversation which protects the core, and which, like other bark, has naturally most to do with the weather, the season, and the heat of the day. At length I asked him the best point of view for the Old Man of the Mountain.

"Dunno, — never see it."

Too young and too happy either to feel or

affect the Juvenalian indifference, I was sincerely astonished, and I expressed it.

The log-compelling man attempted no justification, but after a little asked, "Come from Bawsn?"

"Yes" (with peninsular pride).

"Goodle to see in the vycinity o' Bawsn."

"O yes!" I said, and I thought, — see Boston and die! see the State Houses, old and new, the caterpillar wooden bridges crawling with innumerable legs across the flats of Charles; see the Common, — largest park, doubtless, in the world, — with its files of trees planted as if by a drill-sergeant, and then for your *nunc dimittis!*

"I should like, 'awl, I *should* like to stan, on Bunker Hill. You've ben there offen, likely?"

"N—o—o," unwillingly, seeing the little end of the horn in clear vision at the terminus of this Socratic perspective.

"'Awl, my young frien', you 've larned neow thet wut a man *kin* see any day for nawthin', childern half price, he never doos see. Nawthin' pay, nawthin' vally."

With this modern instance of a wise saw, I departed, deeply revolving these things with myself, and convinced that, whatever the ratio of population, the average amount of human nature to the square mile is the same the world over. I thought of it when I saw people upon the Pincian wondering at the Alchemist sun, as if he never burned the leaden clouds to gold in sight of Charles Street. I thought of it when I found eyes first discovering at Mont Blanc how beautiful snow was. As I walked on, I said to myself, There is one exception, wise hermit, — it is just these *gratis* pictures which the poet puts in his show-box, and which we all gladly pay Wordsworth and the rest for a peep at. The divine faculty is to see what everybody can look at.

While every well-informed man in Europe, from the barber down to the diplomatist, has his view of the Eastern Question, why should I not go personally down East and see for myself? Why not, like Tancred, attempt my own solution of the Mystery of the Orient, — doubly mysterious when you begin the two words with capitals? You know my way of

doing things, to let them simmer in my mind gently for months, and at last do them *impromptu* in a kind of desperation, driven by the Eumenides of unfulfilled purpose. So, after talking about Moosehead till nobody believed me capable of going thither, I found myself at the Eastern Railway station. The only event of the journey hither (I am now at Waterville) was a boy hawking exhilaratingly the last great railroad smash, — thirteen lives lost, — and no doubt devoutly wishing there had been fifty. This having a mercantile interest in horrors, holding stock, as it were, in murder, misfortune, and pestilence, must have an odd effect on the human mind. The birds of ill-omen, at whose sombre flight the rest of the world turn pale, are the ravens which bring food to this little outcast in the wilderness. If this lad give thanks for daily bread, it would be curious to inquire what that phrase represents to his understanding. If there ever be a plum in it, it is Sin or Death that puts it in. Other details of my dreadful ride I will spare you. Suffice it that I arrived here in safety, — in complexion like an Ethiopian serenader half got-up, and so

broiled and peppered that I was more like a devilled kidney than anything else I can think of.

10 P. M. — The civil landlord and neat chamber at the "Elmwood House" were very grateful, and after tea I set forth to explore the town. It has a good chance of being pretty; but, like most American towns, it is in a hobbledehoy age, growing yet, and one cannot tell what may happen. A child with great promise of beauty is often spoiled by its second teeth. There is something agreeable in the sense of completeness which a walled town gives one. It is entire, like a crystal, — a work which man has succeeded in finishing. I think the human mind pines more or less where everything is new, and is better for a diet of stale bread. The number of Americans who visit the Old World is beginning to afford matter of speculation to observant Europeans, and the deep inspirations with which they breathe the air of antiquity, as if their mental lungs had been starved with too thin an atmosphere. For my own part, I never saw a house which I thought old enough to be torn down. It is too like that Scythian fashion of knocking old

people on the head. I cannot help thinking that the indefinable something which we call *character* is cumulative, — that the influence of the same climate, scenery, and associations for several generations is necessary to its gathering head, and that the process is disturbed by continual change of place. The American is nomadic in religion, in ideas, in morals, and leaves his faith and opinions with as much indifference as the house in which he was born. However, we need not bother: Nature takes care not to leave out of the great heart of society either of its two ventricles of hold-back and go-ahead.

It seems as if every considerable American town must have its one specimen of everything, and so there is a college in Waterville, the buildings of which are three in number, of brick, and quite up to the average ugliness which seems essential in edifices of this description. Unhappily, they do not reach that extreme of ugliness where it and beauty come together in the clasp of fascination. We erect handsomer factories for cottons, woollens, and steam-engines, than for doctors, lawyers, and

parsons. The truth is, that, till our struggle with nature is over, till this shaggy hemisphere is tamed and subjugated, the workshop will be the college whose degrees will be most valued. Moreover, steam has made travel so easy that the great university of the world is open to all comers, and the old cloister system is falling astern. Perhaps it is only the more needed, and, were I rich, I should like to found a few lazyships in my Alma Mater as a kind of counterpoise. The Anglo-Saxon race has accepted the primal curse as a blessing, has deified work, and would not have thanked Adam for abstaining from the apple. They would have dammed the four rivers of Paradise, substituted cotton for fig-leaves among the antediluvian populations, and commended man's first disobedience as a wise measure of political economy. But to return to our college. We cannot have fine buildings till we are less in a hurry. We snatch an education like a meal at a railroad-station. Just in time to make us dyspeptic, the whistle shrieks, and we must rush, or lose our places in the great train of life. Yet noble architec-

ture is one element of patriotism, and an eminent one of culture, the finer portions of which are taken in by unconscious absorption through the pores of the mind from the surrounding atmosphere. I suppose we must wait, for we are a great bivouac as yet rather than a nation, — on the march from the Atlantic to the Pacific, — and pitch tents instead of building houses. Our very villages seem to be in motion, following westward the bewitching music of some Pied Piper of Hamelin. We still feel the great push toward sundown given to the peoples somewhere in the gray dawn of history. The cliff-swallow alone of all animated nature emigrates eastward.

Friday, 12*th*. — The coach leaves Waterville at five o'clock in the morning, and one must breakfast in the dark at a quarter past four, because a train starts at twenty minutes before five, — the passengers by both conveyances being pastured gregariously. So one must be up at half past three. The primary geological formations contain no trace of man, and it seems to me that these eocene periods of the day are not fitted for sustaining the

human forms of life. One of the Fathers held that the sun was created to be worshipped at his rising by the Gentiles. The more reason that Christians (except, perhaps, early Christians) should abstain from these heathenish ceremonials. As one arriving by an early train is welcomed by a drowsy maid with the sleep scarce brushed out of her hair, and finds empty grates and polished mahogany, on whose arid plains the pioneers of breakfast have not yet encamped, so a person waked thus unseasonably is sent into the world before his faculties are up and dressed to serve him. It might have been for this reason that my stomach resented for several hours a piece of fried beefsteak which I forced upon it, or, more properly speaking, a piece of that leathern conveniency which in these regions assumes the name. You will find it as hard to believe, my dear Storg, as that quarrel of the Sorbonists, whether one should say *ego amat* or no, that the use of the gridiron is unknown hereabout, and so near a river named after St. Lawrence, too!

To-day has been the hottest day of the sea-

son, yet our drive has not been unpleasant. For a considerable distance we followed the course of the Sebasticook River, a pretty stream with alternations of dark brown pools and wine-colored rapids. On each side of the road the land had been cleared, and little one-story farm-houses were scattered at intervals. But the stumps still held out in most of the fields, and the tangled wilderness closed in behind, striped here and there with the slim white trunks of the elm. As yet only the edges of the great forest have been nibbled away. Sometimes a root-fence stretched up its bleaching antlers, like the trophies of a giant hunter. Now and then the houses thickened into an unsocial-looking village, and we drove up to the grocery to leave and take a mail-bag, stopping again presently to water the horses at some pallid little tavern, whose one red-curtained eye (the bar-room) had been put out by the inexorable thrust of Maine Law. Had Shenstone travelled this road, he would never have written that famous stanza of his; had Johnson, he would never have quoted it. They are to real inns as the skull

of Yorick to his face. Where these villages occurred at a distance from the river, it was difficult to account for them. On the river-bank, a saw-mill or a tannery served as a logical premise, and saved them from total inconsequentiality. As we trailed along, at the rate of about four miles an hour, it was discovered that one of our mail-bags was missing. "Guess somebody 'll pick it up," said the driver coolly: "'t any rate, likely there 's nothin' in it." Who knows how long it took some Elam D. or Zebulon K. to compose the missive intrusted to that vagrant bag, and how much longer to persuade Pamela Grace or Sophronia Melissa that it had really and truly been written? The discovery of our loss was made by a tall man who sat next to me on the top of the coach, every one of whose senses seemed to be prosecuting its several investigation as we went along. Presently, sniffing gently, he remarked: "'Pears to me 's though I smelt sunthin'. Ain't the aix het, think?" The driver pulled up, and, sure enough, the off fore-wheel was found to be smoking. In three minutes he had

snatched a rail from the fence, made a lever, raised the coach, and taken off the wheel, bathing the hot axle and box with water from the river. It was a pretty spot, and I was not sorry to lie under a beech-tree (Tityrus-like, meditating over my pipe) and watch the operations of the fire-annihilator. I could not help contrasting the ready helpfulness of our driver, all of whose wits were about him, current, and redeemable in the specie of action on emergency, with an incident of travel in Italy, where, under a somewhat similar stress of circumstances, our *vetturino* had nothing for it but to dash his hat on the ground and call on Sant' Antonio, the Italian Hercules.

There being four passengers for the Lake, a vehicle called a mud-wagon was detailed at Newport for our accommodation. In this we jolted and rattled along at a livelier pace than in the coach. As we got farther north, the country (especially the hills) gave evidence of longer cultivation. About the thriving town of Dexter we saw fine farms and crops. The houses, too, became prettier; hop-vines were trained about the doors, and

hung their clustering thyrsi over the open windows. A kind of wild rose (called by the country folk the primrose) and asters were planted about the door-yards, and orchards, commonly of natural fruit, added to the pleasant home-look. But everywhere we could see that the war between the white man and the forest was still fierce, and that it would be a long while yet before the axe was buried. The haying being over, fires blazed or smouldered against the stumps in the fields, and the blue smoke widened slowly upward through the quiet August atmosphere. It seemed to me that I could hear a sigh now and then from the immemorial pines, as they stood watching these camp-fires of the inexorable invader. Evening set in, and, as we crunched and crawled up the long gravelly hills, I sometimes began to fancy that Nature had forgotten to make the corresponding descent on the other side. But erelong we were rushing down at full speed; and, inspired by the dactylic beat of the horses' hoofs, I essayed to repeat the opening lines of Evangeline. At the moment I was beginning, we plunged

into a hollow, where the soft clay had been overcome by a road of unhewn logs. I got through one line to this corduroy accompaniment, somewhat as a country choir stretches a short metre on the Procrustean rack of a long-drawn tune. The result was like this: —

"Thihis ihis thehe fohorest prihihimeheval; thehe murhurmuring pihines hahand thehe hehemlohocks!"

At a quarter past eleven, P. M., we reached Greenville, (a little village which looks as if it had dripped down from the hills, and settled in the hollow at the foot of the lake,) having accomplished seventy-two miles in eighteen hours. The tavern was totally extinguished. The driver rapped upon the bar-room window, and after a while we saw heat-lightnings of unsuccessful matches followed by a low grumble of vocal thunder, which I am afraid took the form of imprecation. Presently there was a great success, and the steady blur of lighted tallow succeeded the fugitive brilliance of the pine. A hostler fumbled the door open, and stood staring at but not seeing us, with the

sleep sticking out all over him. We at last contrived to launch him, more like an insensible missile than an intelligent or intelligible being, at the slumbering landlord, who came out wide-awake, and welcomed us as so many half-dollars, — twenty-five cents each for bed, *ditto* breakfast. O Shenstone, Shenstone! The only roost was in the garret, which had been made into a single room, and contained eleven double-beds, ranged along the walls. It was like sleeping in a hospital. However, nice customs curtsy to eighteen-hour rides, and we slept.

Saturday, 13*th*. — This morning I performed my toilet in the bar-room, where there was an abundant supply of water, and a halo of interested spectators. After a sufficient breakfast, we embarked on the little steamer Moosehead, and were soon throbbing up the lake. The boat, it appeared, had been chartered by a party, this not being one of her regular trips. Accordingly we were mulcted in twice the usual fee, the philosophy of which I could not understand. However, it always comes easier to us to comprehend why we receive than why

we pay. I dare say it was quite clear to the captain. There were three or four clearings on the western shore; but after passing these, the lake became wholly primeval, and looked to us as it did to the first adventurous Frenchman who paddled across it. Sometimes a cleared point would be pink with the blossoming willow-herb, "a cheap and excellent substitute" for heather, and, like all such, not *quite* so good as the real thing. On all sides rose deep-blue mountains of remarkably graceful outline, and more fortunate than common in their names. There were the Big and Little Squaw, the Spencer and Lily-bay Mountains. It was debated whether we saw Katahdin or not (perhaps more useful as an intellectual exercise than the assured vision would have been), and presently Mount Kineo rose abruptly before us, in shape not unlike the island of Capri. Mountains are called great natural features, and why they should not retain their names long enough for them also to become naturalized, it is hard to say. Why should every new surveyor rechristen them with the gubernatorial patronymics of the current year?

They are geological noses, and, as they are aquiline or pug, indicate terrestrial idiosyncrasies. A cosmical physiognomist, after a glance at them, will draw no vague inference as to the character of the country. The word *nose* is no better than any other word; but since the organ has got that name, it is convenient to keep it. Suppose we had to label our facial prominences every season with the name of our provincial governor, how should *we* like it? If the old names have no other meaning, they have that of age; and, after all, meaning is a plant of slow growth, as every reader of Shakespeare knows. It is well enough to call mountains after their discoverers, for Nature has a knack of throwing doublets, and somehow contrives it that discoverers have good names. Pike's Peak is a curious hit in this way. But these surveyors' names have no natural *stick* in them. They remind one of the epithets of poetasters, which peel off like a badly gummed postage-stamp. The early settlers did better, and there is something pleasant in the sound of Graylock, Saddleback, and Great Haystack.

"I love those names
Wherewith the exiled farmer tames
Nature down to companionship
With his old world's more homely mood,
And strives the shaggy wild to clip
With arms of familiar habitude."

It is possible that Mount Marcy and Mount Hitchcock may sound as well hereafter as Hellespont and Peloponnesus, when the heroes, their namesakes, have become mythic with antiquity. But that is to look forward a great way. I am no fanatic for Indian nomenclature, — the name of my native district having been Pigsgusset, — but let us at least agree on names for ten years.

There were a couple of loggers on board, in red flannel shirts, and with rifles. They were the first I had seen, and I was interested in their appearance. They were tall, well-knit men, straight as Robin Hood, and with a quiet, self-contained look that pleased me. I fell into talk with one of them.

"Is there a good market for the farmers here in the woods?" I asked.

"None better. They can sell what they

raise at their doors, and for the best of prices. The lumberers want it all, and more."

"It must be a lonely life. But then we all have to pay more or less life for a living."

"Well, it *is* lonesome. Should n't like it. After all, the best crop a man can raise is a good crop of society. We don't live none too long, anyhow; and without society a fellow could n't tell mor 'n half the time whether he was alive or not."

This speech gave me a glimpse into the life of the lumberers' camp. It was plain that there a man would soon find out how much alive he was, — there he could learn to estimate his quality, weighed in the nicest self-adjusting balance. The best arm at the axe or the paddle, the surest eye for a road or for the weak point of a *jam*, the steadiest foot upon the squirming log, the most persuasive voice to the tugging oxen, — all these things are rapidly settled, and so an aristocracy is evolved from this democracy of the woods, for good old mother Nature speaks Saxon still, and with her either Canning or Kenning means King.

A string of five loons was flying back and forth in long, irregular zigzags, uttering at intervals their wild, tremulous cry, which always seems far away, like the last faint pulse of echo dying among the hills, and which is one of those few sounds that, instead of disturbing solitude, only deepen and confirm it. On our inland ponds they are usually seen in pairs, and I asked if it were common to meet five together. My question was answered by a queer-looking old man, chiefly remarkable for a pair of enormous cowhide boots, over which large blue trousers of frocking strove in vain to crowd themselves.

"Wahl, 't ain't ushil," said he, "and it 's called a sign o' rain comin', that is."

"Do you think it will rain?"

With the caution of a veteran *auspex*, he evaded a direct reply. "Wahl, they *du* say it 's a sign o' rain comin'," said he.

I discovered afterward that my interlocutor was Uncle Zeb. Formerly, every New England town had its representative uncle. He was not a pawnbroker, but some elderly man who, for want of more defined family ties, had

"'Wahl, 't ain't ushil,' said he."

gradually assumed this avuncular relation to the community, inhabiting the border-land between respectability and the almshouse, with no regular calling, but working at haying, wood-sawing, whitewashing, associated with the demise of pigs and the ailments of cattle, and possessing as much patriotism as might be implied in a devoted attachment to "New England" — with a good deal of sugar and very little water in it. Uncle Zeb was a good specimen of this palæozoic class, extinct among us for the most part, or surviving, like the Dodo, in the Botany Bays of society. He was ready to contribute (somewhat muddily) to all general conversation; but his chief topics were his boots and the 'Roostick war. Upon the lowlands and levels of ordinary palaver he would make rapid and unlooked-for incursions; but, provision failing, he would retreat to these two fastnesses, whence it was impossible to dislodge him, and to which he knew innumerable passes and short cuts quite beyond the conjecture of common woodcraft. His mind opened naturally to these two subjects, like a book to some favorite passage. As the ear ac-

customs itself to any sound recurring regularly, such as the ticking of a clock, and, without a conscious effort of attention, takes no impression from it whatever, so does the mind find a natural safeguard against this pendulum species of discourse, and performs its duties in the parliament by an unconscious reflex action, like the beating of the heart or the movement of the lungs. If talk seemed to be flagging, our Uncle would put the heel of one boot upon the toe of the other, to bring it within point-blank range, and say, "Wahl, I stump the Devil himself to make that 'ere boot hurt *my* foot," leaving us in doubt whether it were the virtue of the foot or its case which set at nought the wiles of the adversary; or, looking up suddenly, he would exclaim, "Wahl, we eat *some* beans to the 'Roostick war, I tell *you!*" When his poor old clay was wet with gin, his thoughts and words acquired a rank flavor from it, as from too strong a fertilizer. At such times, too, his fancy commonly reverted to a pre-historic period of his life, when he singly had settled all the surrounding country, subdued the Injuns and other wild animals, and named all the towns.

We talked of the winter-camps and the life there. "The best thing is," said our uncle, "to hear a log squeal thru the snow. Git a good, cole, frosty mornin', in Febuary say, an' take an' hitch the critters on to a log that 'll scale seven thousan', an' it 'll squeal as pooty as an'thin' *you* ever hearn, I tell *you*."

A pause.

"Lessee, — seen Cal Hutchins lately?"

"No."

"Seems to me 's though I hed n't seen Cal sence the 'Roostick war. Wahl," etc., etc.

Another pause.

"To look at them boots you 'd think they was too large; but kind o' git your foot into 'em, and they 're as easy 's a glove." (I observed that he never seemed really to get his foot in, — there was always a qualifying *kind o'*.) "Wahl, my foot can play in 'em like a young hedgehog."

By this time we had arrived at Kineo, — a flourishing village of one house, the tavern kept by 'Squire Barrows. The 'Squire is a large, hearty man, with a voice as clear and strong as a northwest wind, and a great laugh

suitable to it. His table is neat and well supplied, and he waits upon it himself in the good old landlordly fashion. One may be much better off here, to my thinking, than in one of those gigantic Columbaria which are foisted upon us patient Americans for hotels, and where one is packed away in a pigeon-hole so near the heavens that, if the comet should flirt its tail, (no unlikely thing in the month of flies,) one would be in danger of being brushed away. Here one does not pay his diurnal three dollars for an undivided five-hundredth part of the pleasure of looking at gilt gingerbread. Here one's relations are with the monarch himself, and one is not obliged to wait the slow leisure of those "attentive clerks" whose praises are sung by thankful deadheads, and to whom the slave who pays may feel as much gratitude as might thrill the heart of a brown-paper parcel toward the express-man who labels it and chucks it under his counter.

Sunday, 14*th*. — The loons were right. About midnight it began to rain in earnest, and did not hold up till about ten o'clock this morning. "This is a Maine dew," said a

shaggy woodman cheerily, as he shook the water out of his wide-awake, "if it don't look out sharp, it 'll begin to rain afore it thinks on 't." The day was mostly spent within doors; but I found good and intelligent society. We should have to be shipwrecked on Juan Fernandez not to find men who knew more than we. In these travelling encounters one is thrown upon his own resources, and is worth just what he carries about him. The social currency of home, the smooth-worn coin which passes freely among friends and neighbors, is of no account. We are thrown back upon the old system of barter; and, even with savages, we bring away only as much of the wild wealth of the woods as we carry beads of thought and experience, strung one by one in painful years, to pay for them with. A useful old jackknife will buy more than the daintiest Louis Quinze paper-folder fresh from Paris. Perhaps the kind of intelligence one gets in these out-of-the-way places is the best, — where one takes a fresh man after breakfast instead of the damp morning paper, and where the magnetic telegraph of human sympathy flashes swift news from brain to brain.

Meanwhile, at a pinch, to-morrow's weather can be discussed. The augury from the flight of birds is favorable, — the loons no longer prophesying rain. The wind also is hauling round to the right quarter, according to some, to the wrong, if we are to believe others. Each man has his private barometer of hope, the mercury in which is more or less sensitive, and the opinion vibrant with its rise or fall. Mine has an index which can be moved mechanically. I fixed it at *set fair*, and resigned myself. I read an old volume of the Patent-Office Report on Agriculture, and stored away a beautiful pile of facts and observations for future use, which the current of occupation, at its first freshet, would sweep quietly off to blank oblivion. Practical application is the only mordant which will set things in the memory. Study, without it, is gymnastics, and not work, which alone will get intellectual bread. One learns more metaphysics from a single temptation than from all the philosophers. It is curious, though, how tyrannical the habit of reading is, and what shifts we make to escape thinking. There is no bore

we dread being left alone with so much as our own minds. I have seen a sensible man study a stale newspaper in a country tavern, and husband it as he would an old shoe on a raft after shipwreck. Why not try a bit of hibernation? There are few brains that would not be better for living on their own fat a little while. With these reflections, I, notwithstanding, spent the afternoon over my Report. If our own experience is of so little use to us, what a dolt is he who recommends to man or nation the experience of others! Like the mantle in the old ballad, it is always too short or too long, and exposes or trips us up. "Keep out of that candle," says old Father Miller, "or you 'll get a singeing." "Pooh, pooh, father, I 've been dipped in the new asbestos preparation," and *frozz!* it is all over with young Hopeful. How many warnings have been drawn from Pretorian bands, and Janizaries, and Mamelukes, to make Napoleon III. impossible in 1851! I found myself thinking the same thoughts over again, when we walked later on the beach and picked up pebbles. The old time-ocean throws upon its shores

just such rounded and polished results of the eternal turmoil, but we only see the beauty of those we have got the headache in stooping for ourselves, and wonder at the dull brown bits of common stone with which our comrades have stuffed their pockets. Afterwards this little fable came of it.

DOCTOR LOBSTER.

A PERCH, who had the toothache, once
Thus moaned, like any human dunce:
"Why must great souls exhaust so soon
Life's thin and unsubstantial boon?
Existence on such sculpin terms, —
Their vulgar loves and hard-won worms, —
What is it all but dross to me,
Whose nature craves a larger sea;
Whose inches, six from head to tail,
Enclose the spirit of a whale;
Who, if great baits were still to win,
By watchful eye and fearless fin
Might with the Zodiac's awful twain
Room for a third immortal gain?
Better the crowd's unthinking plan, —
The hook, the jerk, the frying-pan!
O Death, thou ever roaming shark,
Ingulf me in eternal dark!"

The speech was cut in two by flight:
A real shark had come in sight;
No metaphoric monster, one
It soothes despair to call upon,
But stealthy, sidelong, grim, I wis,
A bit of downright Nemesis;
While it recovered from the shock,
Our fish took shelter 'neath a rock:
This was an ancient lobster's house,
A lobster of prodigious *nous*,
So old that barnacles had spread
Their white encampments o'er its head,
And of experience so stupend,
His claws were blunted at the end,
Turning life's iron pages o'er,
That shut and can be oped no more.

Stretching a hospitable claw,
"At once," said he, "the point I saw;
My dear young friend, your case I rue,
Your great-great-grandfather I knew;
He was a tried and tender friend
I know, — I ate him in the end:
In this vile sea a pilgrim long,
Still my sight 's good, my memory strong;
The only sign that age is near
Is a slight deafness in this ear;
I understand your case as well
As this my old familiar shell;

This sorrow 's a new-fangled notion,
Come in since first I knew the ocean;
We had no radicals, nor crimes,
Nor lobster-pots, in good old times;
Your traps and nets and hooks we owe
To Messieurs Louis Blanc and Co.;
I say to all my sons and daughters,
Shun Red Republican hot waters;
No lobster ever cast his lot
Among the reds, but went to pot:
Your trouble 's in the jaw, you said?
Come, let me just nip off your head,
And, when a new one comes, the pain
Will never trouble you again:
Nay, nay, fear naught: 't is nature's law.
Four times I 've lost this starboard claw;
And still, erelong, another grew,
Good as the old, — and better too!"

The perch consented, and next day
An osprey, marketing that way,
Picked up a fish without a head,
Floating with belly up, stone dead.

MORAL.

Sharp are the teeth of ancient saws,
And sauce for goose is gander's sauce;
But perch's heads are n't lobster's claws.

Monday, 15*th.*—The morning was fine, and we were called at four o'clock. At the moment my door was knocked at, I was mounting a giraffe with that charming *nil admirari* which characterizes dreams, to visit Prester John. *Rat-tat-tat-tat!* upon my door and upon the horn gate of dreams also. I remarked to my skowhegan (the Tâtar for giraffe-driver) that I was quite sure the animal had the *raps,* a common disease among them, for I heard a queer knocking noise inside him. It is the sound of his joints, O Tambourgi! (an Oriental term of reverence,) and proves him to be of the race of El Keirat. *Rat-tat-tat-too!* and I lost my dinner at the Prester's, embarking for a voyage to the Northwest Carry instead. Never use the word *canoe,* my dear Storg, if you wish to retain your self-respect. *Birch* is the term among us backwoodsmen. I never knew it till yesterday; but, like a true philosopher, I made it appear as if I had been intimate with it from childhood. The rapidity with which the human mind levels itself to the standard around it gives us the most pertinent warning

as to the company we keep. It is as hard for most characters to stay at their own average point in all companies, as for a thermometer to say 65° for twenty-four hours together. I like this in our friend Johannes Taurus, that he carries everywhere and maintains his insular temperature, and will have everything accommodate itself to that. Shall I confess that this morning I would rather have broken the moral law, than have endangered the equipoise of the birch by my awkwardness? that I should have been prouder of a compliment to my paddling, than to have had both my guides suppose me the author of Hamlet? Well, Cardinal Richelieu used to jump over chairs.

We were to paddle about twenty miles; but we made it rather more by crossing and recrossing the lake. Twice we landed, — once at a camp, where we found the cook alone, baking bread and gingerbread. Monsieur Soyer would have been startled a little by this shaggy professor, — this Pre-Raphaelite of cookery. He represented the *salæratus* period of the art, and his bread was of a brilliant yel-

low, like those cakes tinged with saffron, which hold out so long against time and the flies in little water-side shops of seaport towns, — dingy extremities of trade fit to moulder on Lethe wharf. His water was better, squeezed out of ice-cold granite in the neighboring mountains, and sent through subterranean ducts to sparkle up by the door of the camp.

"There 's nothin' so sweet an' hulsome as your *real* spring water," said Uncle Zeb, "git it pure. But it 's dreffle hard to git it that ain't got sunthin' the matter of it. Snow-water 'll burn a man's inside out, — I larned that to the 'Roostick war, — and the snow lays terrible long on some o' thes'ere hills. Me an' Eb Stiles was up old Ktahdn once jest about this time o' year, an' we come acrost a kind o' holler like, as full o' snow as your stockin 's full o' your foot. *I* see it fust, an' took an' rammed a settin'-pole; wahl, it was all o' twenty foot into 't, an' could n't fin' no bottom. I dunno as there 's snow-water enough in this to do no hurt. I don't somehow seem to think that *real* spring-water 's so plenty as it used to be." And Uncle Zeb, with

perhaps a little over-refinement of scrupulosity, applied his lips to the Ethiop ones of a bottle of raw gin, with a kiss that drew out its very soul, — a *basia* that Secundus might have sung. He must have been a wonderful judge of water, for he analyzed this, and detected its latent snow simply by his eye, and without the clumsy process of tasting. I could not help thinking that he had made the desert his dwelling-place chiefly in order to enjoy the ministrations of this one fair spirit unmolested.

We pushed on. Little islands loomed trembling between sky and water, like hanging gardens. Gradually the filmy trees defined themselves, the aerial enchantment lost its potency, and we came up with common prose islands that had so late been magical and poetic. The old story of the attained and unattained. About noon we reached the head of the lake, and took possession of a deserted *wongen*, in which to cook and eat our dinner. No Jew, I am sure, can have a more thorough dislike of salt pork than I have in a normal state, yet I had already eaten it raw with hard bread for lunch, and relished it keenly. We

"We sat round and ate thankfully."

soon had our tea-kettle over the fire, and before long the cover was chattering with the escaping steam, which had thus vainly begged of all men to be saddled and bridled, till James Watt one day happened to overhear it. One of our guides shot three Canada grouse, and these were turned slowly between the fire and a bit of salt pork, which dropped fatness upon them as it fried. Although *my* fingers were certainly not made before knives and forks, yet they served as a convenient substitute for those more ancient inventions. We sat round, Turk-fashion, and ate thankfully, while a party of aborigines of the Mosquito tribe, who had camped in the *wongen* before we arrived, dined upon us. I do not know what the British Protectorate of the Mosquitoes amounts to; but, as I squatted there at the mercy of these blood-thirsty savages, I no longer wondered that the classic Everett had been stung into a willingness for war on the question.

"This 'ere 'd be about a complete place for a camp, ef there was on'y a spring o' sweet water handy. Frizzled pork goes wal, don't it? Yes, an' sets wal, too," said Uncle Zeb,

and he again tilted his bottle, which rose nearer and nearer to an angle of forty-five at every gurgle. He then broached a curious dietetic theory: "The reason we take salt pork along is cos it packs handy: you git the greatest amount o' board in the smallest compass, — let alone that it 's more nourishin' than an'thin' else. It kind o' don't disgest so quick, but stays by ye, anourishin' ye all the while.

"A feller can live wal on frizzled pork an' good spring-water, git it *good*. To the 'Roostick war we did n't ask for nothin' better, — on'y beans." (*Tilt, tilt, gurgle, gurgle.*) Then, with an apparent feeling of inconsistency, "But then, come to git used to a particular *kind* o' spring-water, an' it makes a feller hard to suit. Most all sorts o' water taste kind o' *in*sipid away from home. Now, I 've gut a spring to my place that 's as sweet — wahl, it 's as sweet as maple sap. A feller acts about water jest as he does about a pair o' boots. It 's all on it in gittin' wonted. Now, *them* boots," etc., etc. (*Gurgle, gurgle, gurgle, smack!*)

All this while he was packing away the remains of the pork and hard bread in two large firkins. This accomplished, we re-embarked, our uncle on his way to the birch essaying a kind of song in four or five parts, of which the words were hilarious and the tune profoundly melancholy, and which was finished, and the rest of his voice apparently jerked out of him in one sharp falsetto note, by his tripping over the root of a tree. We paddled a short distance up a brook which came into the lake smoothly through a little meadow not far off. We soon reached the Northwest Carry, and our guide, pointing through the woods, said: "That 's the Cannydy road. You can travel that clearn to Kebeck, a hundred an' twenty mile," — a privilege of which I respectfully declined to avail myself. The offer, however, remains open to the public. The Carry is called two miles; but this is the estimate of somebody who had nothing to lug. I had a headache and all my baggage, which, with a traveller's instinct, I had brought with me. (P. S. — I did not even take the keys out of my pocket,

and both my bags were wet through before I came back.) *My* estimate of the distance is eighteen thousand six hundred and seventy-four miles and three quarters, — the fraction being the part left to be travelled after one of my companions most kindly insisted on relieving me of my heaviest bag. I know very well that the ancient Roman soldiers used to carry sixty pounds' weight, and all that; but I am not, and never shall be, an ancient Roman soldier, — no, not even in the miraculous Thundering Legion. Uncle Zeb slung the two provender firkins across his shoulder, and trudged along, grumbling that "he never see sech a contrairy pair as them." He had begun upon a second bottle of his "particular kind o' spring-water," and, at every rest, the gurgle of this peripatetic fountain might be heard, followed by a smack, a fragment of mosaic song, or a confused clatter with the cowhide boots, being an arbitrary symbol, intended to represent the festive dance. Christian's pack gave him not half so much trouble as the firkins gave Uncle Zeb. It grew harder and harder to sling

"He had begun on a second bottle."

them, and with every fresh gulp of the Batavian elixir, they got heavier. Or rather, the truth was, that his hat grew heavier, in which he was carrying on an extensive manufacture of bricks without straw. At last affairs reached a crisis, and a particularly favorable pitch offering, with a puddle at the foot of it, even *the* boots afforded no sufficient ballast, and away went our uncle, the satellite firkins accompanying faithfully his headlong flight. Did ever exiled monarch or disgraced minister find the cause of his fall in himself? Is there not always a strawberry at the bottom of our cup of life, on which we can lay all the blame of our deviations from the straight path? Till now Uncle Zeb had contrived to give a gloss of volition to smaller stumblings and gyrations, by exaggerating them into an appearance of playful burlesque. But the present case was beyond any such subterfuges. He held a bed of justice where he sat, and then arose slowly, with a stern determination of vengeance stiffening every muscle of his face. But what would he select as the culprit? "It 's that cussed firkin," he mumbled

to himself. "I never knowed a firkin cair on so, — no, not in the 'Roostehicick war. There, go long, will ye? and don't come back till you've larned how to walk with a genelman!" And, seizing the unhappy scapegoat by the bail, he hurled it into the forest. It is a curious circumstance, that it was not the firkin containing the bottle which was thus condemned to exile.

The end of the Carry was reached at last, and, as we drew near it, we heard a sound of shouting and laughter. It came from a party of men making hay of the wild grass in Seboomok meadows, which lie around Seboomok pond, into which the Carry empties itself. Their camp was near, and our two hunters set out for it, leaving us seated in the birch on the plashy border of the pond. The repose was perfect. Another heaven hallowed and deepened the polished lake, and through that nether world the fish-hawk's double floated with balanced wings, or, wheeling suddenly, flashed his whitened breast against the sun. As the clattering kingfisher flew unsteadily across, and seemed to push his heavy head

along with ever-renewing effort, a visionary mate flitted from downward tree to tree below. Some tall alders shaded us from the sun, in whose yellow afternoon light the drowsy forest was steeped, giving out that wholesome resinous perfume, almost the only warm odor which it is refreshing to breathe. The tame haycocks in the midst of the wildness gave one a pleasant reminiscence of home, like hearing one's native tongue in a strange country.

Presently our hunters came back, bringing with them a tall, thin, active-looking man, with black eyes, that glanced unconsciously on all sides, like one of those spots of sunlight which a child dances up and down the street with a bit of looking-glass. This was M., the captain of the hay-makers, a famous river-driver, and who was to have fifty men under him next winter. I could now understand that sleepless vigilance of eye. He had consented to take two of our party in his birch to search for moose. A quick, nervous, decided man, he got them into the birch, and was off instantly, without a superfluous word. He evidently looked upon them as he would upon a

couple of logs which he was to deliver at a certain place. Indeed, I doubt if life and the world presented themselves to Napier himself in a more logarithmic way. His only thought was to do the immediate duty well, and to pilot his particular raft down the crooked stream of life to the ocean beyond. The birch seemed to feel him as an inspiring soul, and slid away straight and swift for the outlet of the pond. As he disappeared under the overarching alders of the brook, our two hunters could not repress a grave and measured applause. There is never any extravagance among these woodmen; their eye, accustomed to reckoning the number of feet which a tree will *scale*, is rapid and close in its guess of the amount of stuff in a man. It was *laudari a laudato*, however, for they themselves were accounted good men in a birch. I was amused, in talking with them about him, to meet with an instance of that tendency of the human mind to assign some utterly improbable reason for gifts which seem unaccountable. After due praise, one of them said, "I guess he 's got some Injun in him," although I knew very well that the

speaker had a thorough contempt for the red-man, mentally and physically. Here was mythology in a small way, — the same that under more favorable auspices hatched Helen out of an egg and gave Merlin an Incubus for a father. I was pleased with all I saw of M. He was in his narrow sphere a true *ἄναξ ἀνδρων*, and the ragged edges of his old hat seemed to become coronated as I looked at him. He impressed me as a man really educated, — that is, with his aptitudes *drawn out* and ready for use. He was A. M. and LL. D. in Woods College, — Axe-master and Doctor of Logs. Are not *our* educations commonly like a pile of books laid over a plant in a pot? The compressed nature struggles through at every crevice, but can never get the cramp and stunt out of it. We spend all our youth in building a vessel for our voyage of life, and set forth with streamers flying; but the moment we come nigh the great loadstone mountain of our proper destiny, out leap all our carefully-driven bolts and nails, and we get many a mouthful of good salt brine, and many a buffet of the rough water of experience, before we secure the bare right to live.

We now entered the outlet, a long-drawn aisle of alder, on each side of which spired tall firs, spruces, and white cedars. The motion of the birch reminded me of the gondola, and they represent among water-craft the *felidæ*, the cat-tribe, stealthy, silent, treacherous, and preying by night. I closed my eyes, and strove to fancy myself in the dumb city, whose only horses are the bronze ones of St. Mark. But Nature would allow no rival, and bent down an alder-bough to brush my cheek and recall me. Only the robin sings in the emerald chambers of these tall sylvan palaces, and the squirrel leaps from hanging balcony to balcony.

The rain which the loons foreboded had raised the west branch of the Penobscot so much, that a strong current was setting back into the pond; and, when at last we brushed through into the river, it was full to the brim, — too full for moose, the hunters said. Rivers with low banks have always the compensation of giving a sense of entire fulness. The sun sank behind its horizon of pines, whose pointed summits notched the rosy west in an endless black *sierra*. At the same moment the golden

moon swung slowly up in the east, like the other scale of that Homeric balance in which Zeus weighed the deeds of men. Sunset and moonrise at once! Adam had no more in Eden — except the head of Eve upon his shoulder. The stream was so smooth, that the floating logs we met seemed to hang in a glowing atmosphere, the shadow-half being as real as the solid. And gradually the mind was etherized to a like dreamy placidity, till fact and fancy, the substance and the image, floating on the current of reverie, became but as the upper and under halves of one unreal reality.

In the west still lingered a pale-green light. I do not know whether it be from greater familiarity, but it always seems to me that the pinnacles of pine-trees make an edge to the landscape which tells better against the twilight, or the fainter dawn before the rising moon, than the rounded and cloud-cumulus outline of hard-wood trees.

After paddling a couple of miles, we found the arbored mouth of the little Malahoodus River, famous for moose. We had been on

the look-out for it, and I was amused to hear one of the hunters say to the other, to assure himself of his familiarity with the spot, "You *drove* the West Branch last spring, did n't you?" as one of us might ask about a horse. We did not explore the Malahoodus far, but left the other birch to thread its cedared solitudes, while we turned back to try our fortunes in the larger stream. We paddled on about four miles farther, lingering now and then opposite the black mouth of a moose-path. The incidents of our voyage were few, but quite as exciting and profitable as the *items* of the newspapers. A stray log compensated very well for the ordinary run of accidents, and the floating *carkiss* of a moose which we met could pass muster instead of a singular discovery of human remains by workmen in digging a cellar. Once or twice we saw what seemed ghosts of trees; but they turned out to be dead cedars, in winding-sheets of long gray moss, made spectral by the moonlight. Just as we were turning to drift back down-stream, we heard a loud gnawing sound close by us on the bank. One of our guides thought it a hedgehog, the

other a bear. I inclined to the bear, as making the adventure more imposing. A rifle was fired at the sound, which began again with the most provoking indifference, ere the echo, flaring madly at first from shore to shore, died far away in a hoarse sigh.

Half past Eleven, P. M. — No sign of a moose yet. The birch, it seems, was strained at the Carry, or the pitch was softened as she lay on the shore during dinner, and she leaks a little. If there be any virtue in the *sitzbad*, I shall discover it. If I cannot extract green cucumbers from the moon's rays, I get something quite as cool. One of the guides shivers so as to shake the birch.

Quarter to Twelve. — Later from the Freshet! — The water in the birch is about three inches deep, but the dampness reaches already nearly to the waist. I am obliged to remove the matches from the ground-floor of my trousers into the upper story of a breast-pocket. Meanwhile, we are to sit immovable, — for fear of frightening the moose, — which induces cramps.

Half past Twelve. — A crashing is heard on

the left bank. This is a moose in good earnest. We are besought to hold our breaths, if possible. My fingers so numb, I could not, if I tried. *Crash! crash!* again, and then a plunge, followed by dead stillness. "Swimmin' crik," whispers guide, suppressing all unnecessary parts of speech, —"don't stir." I, for one, am not likely to. A cold fog which has been gathering for the last hour has finished me. I fancy myself one of those naked pigs that seem rushing out of market-doors in winter, frozen in a ghastly attitude of gallop. If I were to be shot myself, I should feel no interest in it. As it is, I am only a spectator, having declined a gun. *Splash!* again; this time the moose is in sight, and *click! click!* one rifle misses fire after the other. The fog has quietly spiked our batteries. The moose goes crashing up the bank, and presently we can hear it chewing its cud close by. So we lie in wait, freezing.

At one o'clock, I propose to land at a deserted *wongen* I had noticed on the way up, where I will make a fire, and leave them to refrigerate as much longer as they please.

Axe in hand, I go plunging through waist-deep weeds dripping with dew, haunted by an intense conviction that the gnawing sound we had heard *was* a bear, and a bear at least eighteen hands high. There is something pokerish about a deserted dwelling, even in broad daylight; but here in the obscure wood, and the moon filtering unwillingly through the trees! Well, I made the door at last, and found the place packed fuller with darkness than it ever had been with hay. Gradually I was able to make things out a little, and began to hack frozenly at a log which I groped out. I was relieved presently by one of the guides. He cut at once into one of the uprights of the building till he got some dry splinters, and we soon had a fire like the burning of a whole wood-wharf in our part of the country. My companion went back to the birch, and left me to keep house. First I knocked a hole in the roof (which the fire began to lick in a relishing way) for a chimney, and then cleared away a damp growth of "pison-elder," to make a sleeping place. When the unsuccessful hunters returned, I

had everything quite comfortable, and was steaming at the rate of about ten horse-power a minute. Young Telemachus was sorry to give up the moose so soon, and, with the teeth chattering almost out of his head, he declared that he would like to stick it out all night. However, he reconciled himself to the fire, and, making our beds of some "splits" which we poked from the roof, we lay down at half past two. I, who have inherited a habit of looking into every closet before I go to bed, for fear of fire, had become in two days such a stoic of the woods, that I went to sleep tranquilly, certain that my bedroom would be in a blaze before morning. And so, indeed, it was; and the withes that bound it together being burned off, one of the sides fell in without waking me.

Tuesday, 16*th*. — After a sleep of two hours and a half, so sound that it was as good as eight, we started at half past four for the hay-makers' camp again. We found them just getting breakfast. We sat down upon the *deacon-seat* before the fire blazing between the bedroom and the *salle à manger*, which were

simply two roofs of spruce-bark, sloping to the ground on one side, the other three being left open. We found that we had, at least, been luckier than the other party, for M. had brought back his convoy without even seeing a moose. As there was not room at the table for all of us to breakfast together, these hospitable woodmen forced us to sit down first, although we resisted stoutly. Our breakfast consisted of fresh bread, fried salt pork, stewed whortleberries, and tea. Our kind hosts refused to take money for it, nor would M. accept anything for his trouble. This seemed even more open-handed when I remembered that they had brought all their stores over the Carry upon their shoulders, paying an ache *extra* for every pound. If their hospitality lacked anything of hard external polish, it had all the deeper grace which springs only from sincere manliness. I have rarely sat at a *table d'hôte* which might not have taken a lesson from them in essential courtesy. I have never seen a finer race of men. They have all the virtues of the sailor, without that unsteady roll in the gait with which the ocean proclaims itself quite

as much in the moral as in the physical habit of a man. They appeared to me to have hewn out a short northwest passage through wintry woods to those spice-lands of character which we dwellers in cities must reach, if at all, by weary voyages in the monotonous track of the trades.

By the way, as we were embirching last evening for our moose-chase, I asked what I was to do with my baggage. "Leave it here," said our guide, and he laid the bags upon a platform of alders, which he bent down to keep them beyond reach of the rising water.

"Will they be safe here?"

"As safe as they would be locked up in your house at home."

And so I found them at my return; only the hay-makers had carried them to their camp for greater security against the chances of the weather.

We got back to Kineo in time for dinner; and in the afternoon, the weather being fine, went up the mountain. As we landed at the foot, our guide pointed to the remains of a red shirt and a pair of blanket trousers.

"That," said he, "is the reason there's such a trade in ready-made clo'es. A suit gits pooty well wore out by the time a camp breaks up in the spring, and the lumberers want to look about right when they come back into the settlements, so they buy somethin' ready-made and heave ole bust-up into the bush." True enough, thought I, this is the Ready-made Age. It is quicker being covered than fitted. So we all go to the slop-shop and come out uniformed, every mother's son with habits of thinking and doing cut on one pattern, with no special reference to his peculiar build.

Kineo rises 1750 feet above the sea, and 750 above the lake. The climb is very easy, with fine outlooks at every turn over lake and forest. Near the top is a spring of water, which even Uncle Zeb might have allowed to be wholesome. The little tin dipper was scratched all over with names, showing that vanity, at least, is not put out of breath by the ascent. O Ozymandias, King of kings! We are all scrawling on something of the kind. "My name is engraved on the institutions of my country," thinks the statesman. But,

alas! institutions are as changeable as tin-dippers; men are content to drink the same old water, if the shape of the cup only be new, and our friend gets two lines in the Biographical Dictionaries. After all, these inscriptions, which make us smile up here, are about as valuable as the Assyrian ones which Hincks and Rawlinson read at cross-purposes. Have we not Smiths and Browns enough, that we must ransack the ruins of Nimroud for more? Near the spring we met a Bloomer! It was the first chronic one I had ever seen. It struck me as a sensible costume for the occasion, and it will be the only wear in the Greek Kalends, when women believe that sense is an equivalent for grace.

The forest primeval is best seen from the top of a mountain. It then impresses one by its extent, like an Oriental epic. To be in it is nothing, for then an acre is as good as a thousand square miles. You cannot see five rods in any direction, and the ferns, mosses, and tree-trunks just around you are the best of it. As for solitude, night will make a better one with ten feet square of pitch dark; and

mere size is hardly an element of grandeur, except in works of man, — as the Colosseum. It is through one or the other pole of vanity that men feel the sublime in mountains. It is either, How small great I am beside it! or, Big as you are, little I's soul will hold a dozen of you. The true idea of a forest is not a *selva selvaggia*, but something humanized a little, as we imagine the forest of Arden, with trees standing at royal intervals, — a commonwealth, and not a communism. To some moods, it is congenial to look over endless leagues of unbroken savagery without a hint of man.

Wednesday. — This morning fished. Telemachus caught a *laker* of thirteen pounds and a half, and I an overgrown cusk, which we threw away, but which I found afterwards Agassiz would have been glad of, for all is fish that comes to his net, from the fossil down. The fish, when caught, are straightway knocked on the head. A lad who went with us seeming to show an over-zeal in this operation, we remonstrated. But he gave a good, human reason for it, — "He no need to ha' gone and been a fish if he did n't like it," — an excuse

which superior strength or cunning has always found sufficient. It was some comfort, in this case, to think that St. Jerome believed in a limitation of God's providence, and that it did not extend to inanimate things or creatures devoid of reason.

Thus, my dear Storg, I have finished my Oriental adventures, and somewhat, it must be owned, in the diffuse Oriental manner. There is very little about Moosehead Lake in it, and not even the Latin name for moose, which I might have obtained by sufficient research. If I had killed one, I would have given you his name in that dead language. I did not profess to give you an account of the lake; but a journal, and, moreover, *my* journal, with a little nature, a little human nature, and a great deal of I in it, which last ingredient I take to be the true spirit of this species of writing; all the rest being so much water for tender throats which cannot take it neat.

AT SEA.

AT SEA.

THE sea was meant to be looked at from the shore, as mountains are from the plain. Lucretius made this discovery long ago, and was blunt enough to blurt it forth, romance and sentiment — in other words, the pretence of feeling what we do not feel — being inventions of a later day. To be sure, Cicero used to twaddle about Greek literature and philosophy, much as people do about ancient art nowadays; but I rather sympathize with those stout old Romans who despised both, and believed that to found an empire was as grand an achievement as to build an epic or to carve a statue. But though there might have been twaddle, (as why not, since there was a Senate?) I rather think Pe-

trarch was the first choragus of that sentimental dance which so long led young folks away from the realities of life like the piper of Hamelin, and whose succession ended, let us hope, with Chateaubriand. But for them, Byron, whose real strength lay in his sincerity, would never have talked about the "sea bounding beneath him like a steed that knows his rider," and all that sort of thing. Even if it had been true, steam has been as fatal to that part of the romance of the sea as to hand-loom weaving. But what say you to a twelve days' calm such as we dozed through in mid-Atlantic and in mid-August? I know nothing so tedious at once and exasperating as that regular slap of the wilted sails when the ship rises and falls with the slow breathing of the sleeping sea, one greasy, brassy swell following another, slow, smooth, immitigable as the series of Wordsworth's "Ecclesiastical Sonnets." Even at his best, Neptune, in a *tête-à-tête*, has a way of repeating himself, an obtuseness to the *ne quid nimis*, that is stupefying. It reminds me of organ-music and my good friend Sebastian Bach. A fugue or two will do very well; but

a concert made up of nothing else is altogether too epic for me. There is nothing so desperately monotonous as the sea, and I no longer wonder at the cruelty of pirates. Fancy an existence in which the coming up of a clumsy finback whale, who says *Pooh!* to you solemnly as you lean over the taffrail, is an event as exciting as an election on shore! The dampness seems to strike into the wits as into the lucifer-matches, so that one may scratch a thought half a dozen times and get nothing at last but a faint sputter, the forlorn hope of fire, which only goes far enough to leave a sense of suffocation behind it. Even smoking becomes an employment instead of a solace. Who less likely to come to their wit's end than W. M. T. and A. H. C.? Yet I have seen them driven to five meals a day for mental occupation. I sometimes sit and pity Noah; but even he had this advantage over all succeeding navigators, that, wherever he landed, he was sure to get no ill news from home. He should be canonized as the patron-saint of newspaper correspondents, being the only man who ever had the very last authentic intelligence from everywhere.

The finback whale recorded just above has much the look of a brown-paper parcel, — the whitish stripes that run across him answering for the pack-thread. He has a kind of accidental hole in the top of his head, through which he *pooh-poohs* the rest of creation, and which looks as if it had been made by the chance thrust of a chestnut rail. He was our first event. Our second was harpooning a sunfish, which basked dozing on the lap of the sea, looking so much like the giant turtle of an alderman's dream, that I am persuaded he would have made mock-turtle soup rather than acknowledge his imposture. But he broke away just as they were hauling him over the side, and sank placidly through the clear water, leaving behind him a crimson trail that wavered a moment and was gone.

The sea, though, has better sights than these. When we were up with the Azores, we began to meet flying-fish and Portuguese men-of-war beautiful as the galley of Cleopatra, tiny craft that dared these seas before Columbus. I have seen one of the former rise from the crest of a wave, and, glancing from another

some two hundred feet beyond, take a fresh flight of perhaps as long. How Calderon would have similized this pretty creature had he ever seen it! How would he have run him up and down the gamut of simile! If a fish, then a fish with wings; if a bird, then a bird with fins; and so on, keeping up the poor shuttle-cock of a conceit as is his wont. Indeed, the poor thing is the most killing bait for a comparison, and I assure you I have three or four in my inkstand; — but be calm, they shall stay there. Moore, who looked on all nature as a kind of *Gradus ad Parnassum*, a *thesaurus* of similitude, and spent his life in a game of What is my thought like? with himself, *did* the flying-fish on his way to Bermuda. So I leave him in peace.

The most beautiful thing I have seen at sea, all the more so that I had never heard of it, is the trail of a shoal of fish through the phosphorescent water. It is like a flight of silver rockets, or the streaming of northern lights through that silent nether heaven. I thought nothing could go beyond that rustling star-foam which was churned up by our ship's

bows, or those eddies and disks of dreamy flame that rose and wandered out of sight behind us.

'T was fire our ship was plunging through,
Cold fire that o'er the quarter flew ;
And wandering moons of idle flame
Grew full and waned, and went and came,
Dappling with light the huge sea-snake
That slid behind us in the wake.

But there was something even more delicately rare in the apparition of the fish, as they turned up in gleaming furrows the latent moonshine which the ocean seemed to have hoarded against these vacant interlunar nights. In the Mediterranean one day, as we were lying becalmed, I observed the water freckled with dingy specks, which at last gathered to a pinkish scum on the surface. The sea had been so phosphorescent for some nights, that when the Captain gave me my bath, by dousing me with buckets from the house on deck, the spray flew off my head and shoulders in sparks. It occurred to me that this dirty-looking scum might be the luminous matter, and I had a pailful dipped up to keep till after

dark. When I went to look at it after nightfall, it seemed at first perfectly dead; but when I shook it, the whole broke out into what I can only liken to milky flames, whose lambent silence was strangely beautiful, and startled me almost as actual projection might an alchemist. I could not bear to be the death of so much beauty; so I poured it all overboard again.

Another sight worth taking a voyage for is that of the sails by moonlight. Our course was "south and by east, half south," so that we seemed bound for the full moon as she rolled up over our wavering horizon. Then I used to go forward to the bowsprit and look back. Our ship was a clipper, with every rag set, stunsails, sky-scrapers, and all; nor was it easy to believe that such a wonder could be built of canvas as that white many-storied pile of cloud that stooped over me, or drew back as we rose and fell with the waves.

These are all the wonders I can recall of my five weeks at sea, except the sun. Were you ever alone with the sun? You think it a very simple question; but I never was, in the

full sense of the word, till I was held up to him one cloudless day on the broad buckler of the ocean. I suppose one might have the same feeling in the desert. I remember getting something like it years ago, when I climbed alone to the top of a mountain, and lay face up on the hot gray moss, striving to get a notion of how an Arab might feel. It was my American commentary of the Koran, and not a bad one. In a New England winter, too, when everything is gagged with snow, as if some gigantic physical geographer were taking a cast of the earth's face in plaster, the bare knob of a hill will introduce you to the sun as a comparative stranger. But at sea you may be alone with him day after day, and almost all day long. I never understood before that nothing short of full daylight can give the supremest sense of solitude. Darkness will not do so, for the imagination peoples it with more shapes than ever were poured from the frozen loins of the populous North. The sun, I sometimes think, is a little *grouty* at sea, especially at high noon, feeling that he wastes his beams on those

fruitless furrows. It is otherwise with the moon. She "comforts the night," as Chapman finely says, and I always found her a companionable creature.

In the ocean-horizon I took untiring delight. It is the true magic-circle of expectation and conjecture, — almost as good as a wishing-ring. What will rise over that edge we sail toward daily and never overtake? A sail? an island? the new shore of the Old World? Something rose every day, which I need not have gone so far to see, but at whose levee I was a much more faithful courtier than on shore. A cloudless sunrise in mid-ocean is beyond comparison for simple grandeur. It is like Dante's style, bare and perfect. Naked sun meets naked sea, the true classic of nature. There may be more sentiment in morning on shore, — the shivering fairy-jewelry of dew, the silver point-lace of sparkling hoar-frost, — but there is also more complexity, more of the romantic. The one savors of the elder Edda, the other of the Minnesingers.

> And I thus floating, lonely elf,
> A kind of planet by myself,

The mists draw up and furl away,
And in the east a warming gray,
Faint as the tint of oaken woods
When o'er their buds May breathes and broods,
Tells that the golden sunrise-tide
Is lapsing up earth's thirsty side,
Each moment purpling on the crest
Of some stark billow farther west :
And as the sea-moss droops and hears
The gurgling flood that nears and nears,
And then with tremulous content
Floats out each thankful filament,
So waited I until it came,
God's daily miracle, — O shame
That I had seen so many days
Unthankful, without wondering praise,
Not recking more this bliss of earth
Than the cheap fire that lights my hearth !
But now glad thoughts and holy pour
Into my heart, as once a year
To San Miniato's open door,
In long procession, chanting clear,
Through slopes of sun, through shadows hoar,
The coupled monks slow-climbing sing,
And like a golden censer swing
From rear to front, from front to rear
Their alternating bursts of praise,

Till the roof's fading seraphs gaze
Down through an odorous mist, that crawls
Lingeringly up the darkened walls,
And the dim arches, silent long,
Are startled with triumphant song.

I wrote yesterday that the sea still rimmed our prosy lives with mystery and conjecture. But one is shut up on shipboard like Montaigne in his tower, with nothing to do but to review his own thoughts and contradict himself. *Dire, redire, et me contredire,* will be the staple of my journal till I see land. I say nothing of such matters as the *montagna bruna* on which Ulysses was wrecked; but since the sixteenth century could any man reasonably hope to stumble on one of those wonders which were cheap as dirt in the days of St. Saga? Faustus, Don Juan, and Tanhaüser are the last ghosts of legend, that lingered almost till the Gallic cock-crow of universal enlightenment and disillusion. The Public School has done for Imagination. What shall I see in Outre-Mer, or on the way thither, but what can be seen with eyes? To be sure, I stick by the sea-serpent,

and would fain believe that science has scotched, not killed, him. Nor is he to be lightly given up, for, like the old Scandinavian snake, he binds together for us the two hemispheres of Past and Present, of Belief and Science. He is the link which knits us seaboard Yankees with our Norse progenitors, interpreting between the age of the dragon and that of the railroad train. We have made ducks and drakes of that large estate of wonder and delight bequeathed to us by ancestral vikings, and this alone remains to us unthrift heirs of Linn.

I feel an undefined respect for a man who has seen the sea-serpent. He is to his brother-fishers what the poet is to his fellow-men. Where they have seen nothing better than a school of horse-mackerel, or the idle coils of ocean around Half-way Rock, he has caught authentic glimpses of the withdrawing mantle-hem of the Edda age. I care not for the monster himself. It is not the thing, but the belief in the thing, that is dear to me. May it be long before Professor Owen is comforted with the sight of his unfleshed vertebræ, long

before they stretch many a rood behind Kimball's or Barnum's glass, reflected in the shallow orbs of Mr. and Mrs. Public, which stare, but see not! When we read that Captain Spalding, of the pink-stern *Three Pollies*, has beheld him rushing through the brine like an infinite series of bewitched mackerel-casks, we feel that the mystery of old Ocean, at least, has not yet been sounded, — that Faith and Awe survive there unevaporate. I once ventured the horse-mackerel theory to an old fisherman, browner than a tomcod. "Hos-mackril!" he exclaimed indignantly, "hos-mackril be—" (here he used a phrase commonly indicated in laical literature by the same sign which serves for Doctorate in Divinity,) "don't yer spose *I* know a hos-mackril?" The intonation of that "*I*" would have silenced Professor Monkbarns Owen with his provoking *phoca* forever. What if one should ask *him* if he knew a trilobite?

The fault of modern travellers is, that they see nothing out of sight. They talk of eocene periods and tertiary formations, and tell us how the world looked to the plesiosaur. They

take science (or nescience) with them, instead of that soul of generous trust their elders had. All their senses are sceptics and doubters, materialists reporting things for other sceptics to doubt still further upon. Nature becomes a reluctant witness upon the stand, badgered with geologist hammers and phials of acid. There have been no travellers since those included in Hakluyt and Purchas, except Martin, perhaps, who saw an inch or two into the invisible at the Orkneys. We have peripatetic lecturers, but no more travellers. Travellers' stories are no longer proverbial. We have picked nearly every apple (wormy or otherwise) from the world's tree of knowledge, and that without an Eve to tempt us. Two or three have hitherto hung luckily beyond reach on a lofty bough shadowing the interior of Africa, but there is a German Doctor at this very moment pelting at them with sticks and stones. It may be only next week, and these too, bitten by geographers and geologists, will be thrown away.

Analysis is carried into everything. Even Deity is subjected to chemic tests. We must

have exact knowledge, a cabinet stuck full of facts pressed, dried, or preserved in spirits instead of the large, vague world our fathers had. With them science was poetry; with us, poetry is science. Our modern Eden is a *hortus siccus*. Tourists defraud rather than enrich us. They have not that sense of æsthetic proportion which characterized the elder traveller. Earth is no longer the fine work of art it was, for nothing is left to the imagination. Job Hortop, arrived at the height of the Bermudas, thinks it full time to indulge us in a merman. Nay, there is a story told by Webster, in his "Witchcraft," of a merman with a mitre, who, on being sent back to his watery diocese of finland, made what advances he could toward an episcopal benediction by bowing his head thrice. Doubtless he had been consecrated by St. Antony of Padua. A dumb bishop would be sometimes no unpleasant phenomenon, by the way. Sir John Hawkins is not satisfied with telling us about the merely sensual Canaries, but is generous enough to throw us in a handful of "certain flitting islands" to boot. Henry Hawkes describes the visible Mexican

cities, and then is not so frugal but that he can give us a few invisible ones. Thus do these generous ancient mariners make children of us again. Their successors show us an earth effete and past bearing, tracing out with the eyes of industrious fleas every wrinkle and crowfoot.

The journals of the elder navigators are prose Odysseys. The geographies of our ancestors were works of fancy and imagination. They read poems where we yawn over items. Their world was a huge wonder-horn, exhaustless as that which Thor strove to drain. Ours would scarce quench the small thirst of a bee. No modern voyager brings back the magical foundation-stones of a Tempest. No Marco Polo, traversing the desert beyond the city of Lok, would tell of things able to inspire the mind of Milton with

> "Calling shapes and beckoning shadows dire,
> And airy tongues that syllable men's names
> On sands and shores and desert wildernesses."

It was easy enough to believe the story of Dante, when two thirds of even the upper-

world were yet untraversed and unmapped. With every step of the recent traveller our inheritance of the wonderful is diminished. Those beautifully pictured notes of the Possible are redeemed at a ruinous discount in the hard and cumbrous coin of the actual. How are we not defrauded and impoverished? Does California vie with El Dorado? or are Bruce's Abyssinian kings a set-off for Prester John? A bird in the bush is worth two in the hand. And if the philosophers have not even yet been able to agree whether the world has any existence independent of ourselves, how do we not gain a loss in every addition to the catalogue of Vulgar Errors? Where are the fishes which nidificated in trees? Where the monopodes sheltering themselves from the sun beneath their single umbrella-like foot, — umbrella-like in everything but the fatal necessity of being borrowed? Where the Acephali, with whom Herodotus, in a kind of ecstasy, wound up his climax of men with abnormal top-pieces? Where the Roc whose eggs are possibly boulders, needing no far-fetched theory of glacier or iceberg to account for them?

Where the tails of the men of Kent? Where the no legs of the bird of paradise? Where the Unicorn, with that single horn of his, sovereign against all manner of poisons? Where the Fountain of Youth? Where that Thessalian spring, which, without cost to the country, convicted and punished perjurers? Where the Amazons of Orellana? All these, and a thousand other varieties, we have lost, and have got nothing instead of them. And those who have robbed us of them have stolen that which not enriches themselves. It is so much wealth cast into the sea beyond all approach of diving-bells. We owe no thanks to Mr. J. E. Worcester, whose Geography we studied enforcedly at school. Yet even he had his relentings, and in some softer moment vouchsafed us a fine, inspiring print of the Maelstrom, answerable to the twenty-four mile diameter of its suction. Year by year, more and more of the world gets disenchanted. Even the icy privacy of the arctic and antarctic circles is invaded. Our youth are no longer ingenious, as indeed no ingenuity is demanded of them. Everything is accounted for, every-

thing cut and dried, and the world may be put together as easily as the fragments of a dissected map. The Mysterious bounds nothing now on the North, South, East, or West. We have played Jack Horner with our earth, till there is never a plum left in it.

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